

Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services Budget Testimony
February 18, 2016

Thank you committee chairs. My name is Evangeline Sargent and I am from Norwich, CT. I am testifying in regards to the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) budget.

The Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services needs every penny you can give it. The recommended adjustments is taking too much away from the system. Consolidating the Regional Mental Health boards and Councils will make it so that they cannot fulfill their mission. They provide an invaluable service to their communities. Without them we would be lost.

We also need to Expand Supportive Housing for Families, Children & Adults. Supportive housing has been shown to reduce hospital costs, as well as improve self-sufficiency. Besides units we need adequate rental subsidies. I may not live in supportive housing, or have rental subsidy. Last year when my roommate passed and I was in search of a place to live if it were not for my family and friends I would have needed a rental subsidy. The sad thing is I knew that I would have been out of luck in that department.

We need to promote wellness, self-determination, and self-sufficiency. Individuals need to be offered services and programs such as Supported Employment, Supported Education, Advance Directives, Wellness Recovery Action Planning, as well as other programs and services that are cost effective proven. Do you know how hard it is to get a job in today's market when you have not worked in a number of years? Not to mention how frightening it can be. Also, when dealing with mental health issues, how it can be to go back to or continue with schooling. Not everyone knows about or can fill out an advance directive form alone.

Age appropriate services for young adults needs to be provided. The Department of Children and Families (DCF) and DMHAS need to be held accountable for providing timely services and supports for young adults with mental health needs.. This includes those having their first mental health episode. One idea for services and supports could be peer mentors.

Please remember that when you cut money from the DMHAS budget you are impacting people who need these services. Thank you for your time.

Evangeline Sargent